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Abreviations. BMNH: British Museum (Natural History); IRSNB: Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique; MRAC: Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale.

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J. T. Last and the type-locality of Benson's Rockthrush *Monticola bensoni*

by N. J. Collar and I. Tattersall

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Benson's Rockthrush *Monticola bensoni* was described by Farkas (1971) from 2 old specimens in the American Museum of Natural History "collected by Zaast at Ankarefu, Antinosy Cy, S. W. Madagascar". Farkas was unable to trace "Ankarefu" but mapped "Antinosy County" as in the far south of Madagascar (more in the southeast than the southwest, despite the "S.W." of the label); all Farkas's other records of the species were from the rocky, dry regions of the central-south and southwest of the country. Collar & Stuart (1985: 473-475), in treating Benson's Rockthrush as a threatened species (IUCN category "Insufficiently Known"), provided further records from the central-south and southwest of Madagascar; they pointed out that "Antinosy County" was probably a misreading of Antinosy country, and that, according to Deschamps (1960), émigrés of the Antanosy (the correct modern spelling) people of far southeast Madagascar had (in the nineteenth century or earlier) colonised an area of the southwest of the island, north of the Onilahy River at the southernmost end of the Isalo massif. They suggested that the type-material derived from this latter "Antinosy country" and noted that an "Ankarefo" is or was situated at 23°06′S, 46°06′E, some 100 km east of the Isalo massif.

More certain information on the origins of the type-material was impossible until more could be learnt of "Zaast". In the course of researching the 28 Madagascar species in Collar & Stuart (1985), N.J.C. read widely in the relevant nineteenth as well as twentieth century literature, and examined specimens in 9 western European museums, but never found mention of an explorer or dealer named Zaast, nor indeed of Antinosy or Antanosy County or country. It seemed possible that "Zaast" was a misreading of Lantz, who was keeper of the Réunion museum and made a collection of Madagascar birds in the 1860s (see Milon 1951: 153), or (van der) Henst, a member of the Leiden Museum team also operating in Madagascar in the 1860s and honoured in the name *Accipiter henstii* (Schlegel 1873: 62-63). However, G. S. Keith, with whom N.J.C. was in correspondence at the time, kindly

inspected the labels of the type-material and confirmed that the collector was unquestionably there named "Zaast".

After the publication of Collar & Stuart (1985), N.J.C. had occasion to look through Tattersall (1982), and there (pp. 104-105) noticed that the type-specimen of the lemur *Propithecus majori* (=*P. verreauxi verreauxi*) was collected by J. T. Last in "Antinosy Country" some time in or before 1894. The obvious likelihood that "Zaast" was Last led to N.J.C. and I.T. corresponding over Last's activities in Madagascar and to our pursuit of various leads in an attempt to resolve the questions surrounding the provenance of the *bensoni* type-material.

I.T. again checked the label of the type-specimen and the name there is indeed definitely "Zaast". However, this is patently a later transcription, and in the AMNH catalogue (whose entry for the specimen pre-dates the label) the name is written as "Loast", but in such a hand that it could easily be misread as "Zoast" or "Zaast"; and we assume that this itself was copied from some original documentation of the specimens which was written by someone who looped the capital L so that it could easily be misread as Lo.

In due course we discovered certain articles by Last (1894a, b, 1895, 1896), and his obituary (*Geogr. J.* 83 [1934]: 352). Joseph Thomas Last was 85 when he died in 1933. He began his career as a missionary in East Africa, but combined or at times replaced this vocation with that of zoological and botanical collector and explorer. He was, for example, the first of (so far as we are aware) only 2 men to explore Mount Namuli in Mozambique (Last 1887), the other being Vincent (1933-1935). He was Commissioner of Slavery in Zanzibar in the late 1890s and, according to a (not wholly accurate) entry in Desmond (1977: 372), he collected plants in Arabia in 1908-1910. The quality of detail in his articles on Madagascar suggest that he must have kept diaries of his travels, but inquiries to date have failed to reveal their existence.

Last (1895) closely documents at least part of his explorations in southwest Madagascar. As the title of his article suggests, his travels in "the Antinosi [*sic*] country" were an important component of his overall explorations of Madagascar, and his first sentence confirms that the area in question is "the south-central districts, inhabited by the Antinosi immigrants from the country near Fort Dauphin, on the south-east coast". His "primary object . . . was to make collections of Lepidoptera" but he also sought "other objects of natural history, and . . . general information about the country, people, and places as circumstances permitted". Fossils were among the objects sought, as is borne out by Last (1894a), and in an evaluation of one of Last's fossils, Forsyth Major (1894: 16) refers to him as "a collector of the Hon. Walter Rothschild". Perusal of Rothschild's journal *Novitates Zoologicae* reveals some evidence of this connexion (eg. 1: 70, *Pterogon lasti,* and 1: 666, *Propithecus majori*; 2: 23 has a footnote that the Antinosy country in question is not to be mistaken for the region in the far southeast of Madagascar).

Last (1895: 230) refers to his "nearly five years' residence in Madagascar", but the article in total appears to treat only the first 3 (indeed it ends so abruptly that one expects to find a continuation, but none appears to have been published). Last arrived in Madagascar in July 1889 (p. 227); he was at "Mahabu" town for Christmas 1890 (p. 242); he stayed there "a few weeks" (p. 242), spent 2 months around "the Berununu villages" (p. 243), about a month at "Nosi-vé" (p. 245), several months around "Salari" (p. 245); he made several short trips from Nosi-vé (p. 249) and then travelled

inland to the ''Antinosi country'' and in a week or so reached ''Ilunti'' (p. 250). He then remained at ''Manansua . . . for some nine months, making short trips and camping about the [Antinosi] country in all directions'' (p. 250), the article then closing with a description of his return journey down the ''Ong'ulahi'' (Onilahy) River to the coast. From this information, counting his ''several months'' around Salari as 10 weeks and his several short trips from Nosi-vé as 2 weeks, we judge that Last would have been in Antanosy country from approximately August 1891 to April 1892. (This would therefore leave another 2 years of his travels to be accounted for.)

That these dates are fairly accurate is supported by evidence in Last (1894a), a paper that was received and published in the first week of February and which refers first to his work in ''Antinosi country'', then to explorations along the southwest coast. These latter embraced a district where he found fossils ''which I have sent home during the last two years'' (p. 127), and he then confirms that the first of these particular fossils was sent home in 1892 (p. 128). There can be little doubt, therefore, that his 9 months based at ''Manansua'' in Antanosy country came to an end in the course (and probably in the first half) of 1892.

In December 1985 N.J.C. gave a public lecture which mentioned our interest in Last's itinerary through Madagascar, and afterwards P. J. Morgan informed him that Last's ornithological collection from Madagascar is in Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool. C. T. Fisher kindly provided a complete inventory of this material, amounting to some 84 specimens. Very few labels possess locality data, and all the dates (years only) were added by H. B. Tristram, to whom Rothschild evidently passed the great majority of the birds Last sent back. Two specimens are labelled ''Ankarefu'', one, a Madagascar Partridge *Margaroperdix madagarensis* (No 18547) not dated, and one, a White-browed Owl *Ninox superciliaris* (No 18350), dated 1893. C. T. Fisher comments that ''Tristram seemed a bit arbitrary about whether he put 1892 or 1893 on his labels – they are all quickly scrawled and he could well have got the label on *Ninox superciliaris* wrong''. Last (1894a) shows clearly that he did. (There are, incidentally, no new specimens of *Monticola bensoni* among the Liverpool material.)

The types of *Monticola bensoni* were evidently collected in the course of the 9 months spent in Antanosy country based at ''Manansua''. Last (1895) provided a detailed map (p. 300) of his itinerary through southwest Madagascar in the vicinity of the Onilahy River, and this includes the ''Antinosi country'' with the routes he took while exploring from Manansua. The routes in question cover the area (very roughly 30 km by 30 km) north of the Onilahy River between its southward-flowing tributaries, the ''Tahéza'' and the ''Isakamare''. One of these routes, running north and then northeast from Manansua, crosses an Ankarefu River, a northeast flowing tributary of the ''Anantaki'' River mentioned (as ''Amantaki'') in the text of his article (p. 250). Last's map shows a host of villages throughout the ''Antinosi country'', but the only other Ankarefu is another (southward flowing) river somewhat further to the east in a less clearly mapped region which, from the routes he provides, Last never visited. The Ankarefu River he crossed flows between hills marked ''Tsitunganundri Range'' to the north and ''Itungani Hills'' to the south, and the coordinates of the intersection of his route and the watercourse, read from his map, are 23°21′S, 44°59′E.

A modern map (Institut Géographique National à Tananarive 1964), on

which ''Ilunti'' appears as Elonty and the ''Tahéza'' and ''Isakamare'' as the Teheza and Sakamare Rivers, shows that the lines of longitude on Last's map were somewhat misplaced. The IGNT map marks a seasonal watercourse flowing northeast to the west of Elonty, and this is evidently what Last called the ''Ankarefu River''. The coordinates for the point of intersection of Last's route would be 23°21′S, 44°48′E. (The other, southward flowing ''Ankarefu River'', apparently not visited by Last, evidently gave its name to a village along its course – or vice versa – as the IGNT map shows an Ankarefo at 23°21′S, 44°56′E.)

We think it very probable that the type-material of Benson's Rockthrush was collected in the immediate vicinity of the locality signified by the coordinates 23°21′S, 44°48′E. However, it is always possible that the particular Ankarefu of the labels was elsewhere in the region. It is, however, established beyond doubt that the type-material was collected by J. T. Last, in either 1891 or 1892, somewhere in the 900 km^2 of terrain north of the Onilahy River whose centre, on modern maps, lies roughly at 23°25′S, 44°45′E, i.e. just southwest of the southern end of the Isalo massif. All records of Benson's Rockthrush therefore derive from between the Mangoky and Onilahy Rivers, with the general focus of distribution being the Isalo massif and its environs (see Collar & Stuart 1985).

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Notes on *Hirundo fuliginosa* and its status as a "cliff swallow"

by Roy A. Earlé

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The Afrotropical Dusky Swallow *Hirundo fuliginosa* is a little known species confined to the lowland forests of Cameroun, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon (Fig. 1). Although it is probably not at all rare (Good 1953), it is often confused with other, more common forest swallow species such as *Psalidoprocne nitens*, from which "they can hardly be distinguished in the

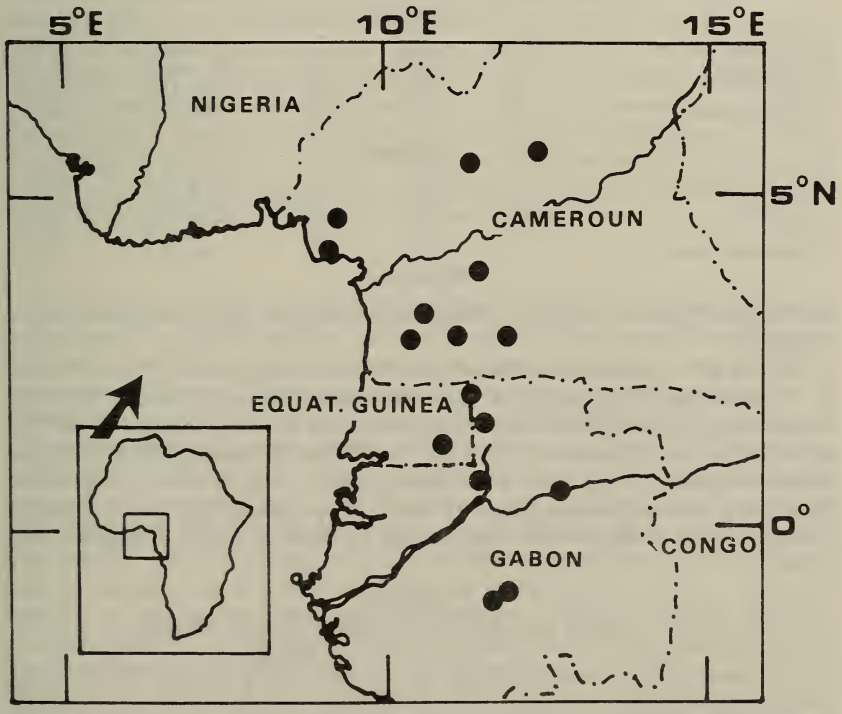

Figure 1. Map of equatorial West Africa with the localities from which *Hirundo fuliginosa* is known.